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# THE ADMINISTRATION'S MILITARY POLICY

BY RICHARD STOCKTON, JR.

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CONGRESS, "pork barrel" political methods, and public indifference and ignorance, according to the military men, have been responsible for the past military unpreparedness of the United States. Now, however, when the public is really demanding that there be reasonable preparation, and when politicians are anxious rather than afraid to support adequate defense, it seems as though the military men themselves are about to fight like children over the details of the laws which are to secure the desired result. In fact, it is not unlikely that much of the opposition which the Administration's plans will have to face will be due to differences of opinion among the military authorities.

That there will be a strong fight on the Administration's proposed military policy is now certain. To no small degree this is due to the fact that the Administration is attempting to meet political conditions and at the same time to conciliate several opposing parties of military men, by offering plans that satisfy none of them.

There is a very strong element among our army that considers that compulsory service is the only possible solution of our problem, while the majority of Regular Army officers think that a Regular Army of about 250,000 men at peace strength, with a reserve which would give a trained war strength of over 500,000 is desirable. Opposed to this view are the highest officers of the Organized Militia, or, as it is more popularly called, the National Guard. These officers, very naturally, hold that all efforts should be turned toward establishing a better militia, under the control of the various States, but under the general direction of the War Department. As a third school of thought there is a

growing number of officers who feel that compulsory service, or a large standing army, are both so opposed to the American ideals that they will be adopted only under the compulsion of necessity, and that the militia, under State control, is absolutely out of the question as a part of any good scheme for national defense. This group consists of Army officers with an unusual amount of political knowledge and of National Guard officers with more than the average degree of military knowledge.

The present plans, however, not only oppose the first and second theories, but also fail to satisfy the third party. It must be admitted that, from a military viewpoint alone, a standing army of 250,000 or more, with reserves to maintain the force and bring it up to war strength, and a backing of a million or more trained citizens, is the true solution, and that compulsory service to maintain such a force would not only be fair and advantageous, but probably would be necessary. But those who advocate such a plan have taken up a hopeless cause, which we may dismiss at once as impossible of enactment in our laws. The present plans call for a slight increase in the Regular Army, a Continental Army of citizen soldiers, and more money for the National Guard. They include the regular increase to appease the Army, more money to satisfy the Militia, and provide for the Continental Army as the real attempt to give the nation an effective land force. This programme might well be the foundation of a most excellent military policy. If, however, we fail to consider both political and military conditions in proper proportion, the proposed plans cannot but cause controversy and result in another patchwork military policy.

When the plans of the Administration are carefully analyzed in such a manner there are three things which become evident:

*First:* That the War Department is not recommending what our military experts think we should have (a large Regular force) but rather what the Secretary of War hopes Congress may grant.

*Second:* That in attempting to meet political conditions the War Department is proposing a new citizen soldiery (The Continental Army) which is impractical; and that we continue to spend money on an old citizen soldier organization (The Militia) which can never be efficient.

*Third:* That, although separately both these forces must

be failures, a combination of the good points of the existing and proposed citizen soldieries will probably result in a fairly dependable force, second in efficiency to a Regular Army only.

The proposed increase in the Regular Army is so badly needed as to be almost unquestionable. No military authority can oppose it. The question will, therefore, narrow down to a struggle between those who will be satisfied with nothing but a State-controlled National Guard and those who want a Federal force as a citizen soldiery, ignoring the State troops entirely or in part.

There is no doubt of the fact that it is largely personal interest that will cause the militia to oppose a Federal force. The National Guard is ridiculously inefficient and cannot but remain so as long as it is under the control of the various States. It is for this reason that a Continental Army, properly organized, or some similar force of citizen soldiers under central control, offers the only practicable solution to our present military problem.

The Guard, however, through its higher officers, has already indicated that it fears the effect of the Continental Army scheme. The Guardsmen want to be in the "first line." They want Federal aid, and they intend fighting for it. They will oppose being relegated to the background with all of the influence of 130,000 male citizens of the United States, who can bring to their aid some of the most influential politicians and members of Congress.

Nevertheless, the now well known words of George Washington apply equally well to the militia today and to that of the Revolution. After our early struggles, Washington felt compelled to render this opinion of the militia: "If I were called upon to declare under oath whether the militia had been most serviceable or most harmful, upon the whole I should subscribe to the latter."

We spend over twelve million dollars a year on our present militia force, while our experts know well that it does not, and cannot, accomplish the ends for which it is in existence. In the Revolution, in the War of 1812, in the Civil War and in the Spanish American War there can be found only confirmation of Washington's words.

The National Guard, nevertheless, has much to be proud of. When the obstacles that it must overcome are considered, it is a remarkable force. Its efficiency amazes many

army officers who are aware of the existing handicaps. Among its commissioned officers are a few of the finest soldiers in the United States, and although the lives of a body of troops frequently depend upon the training, experience and skill of their commander, there are many Guard officers in whose hands soldiers would be glad to place themselves. In fact, there are a number who would be preferred to the average Regular of equal rank.

Such facts, however, should not prevent us from considering the efficiency of the National Guard, as a whole, from a strictly impartial viewpoint. According to the report of Brigadier General Albert L. Mills, U.S.A., the chief of the Division of Militia Affairs of the War Department, "the Organized Militia is not fitted to enter upon the work of maneuver campaigns." General Mills, in the same report, continues that "our trained troops, or first line, consist of the Regular Army and Organized Militia." As the Regular Army consists of only about 90,000 men and the Organized Militia of about 130,000 men, it will be seen that this War Department report might well read "two-thirds of our trained troops, or first line, are not even fitted to play at war."

How, then, can these troops be fit to take part in an actual combat? If we would answer that question we would solve a problem that has been worrying our military experts for some time. The real truth is that we have no first line, for the Regular Army is too small, and the Guard is both too small and too inefficient to furnish a first line of defense against any of the great Powers.

The inefficiency of the militia is not due to the members themselves. It is not because the officers are not intelligent and willing and hard working, or because the enlisted men are not physically fit, nor is it because the officers or men are lacking in bravery or other characteristics that go to make up good soldiers. On the contrary the officers are intelligent, and work at a personal sacrifice of time and money that is the wonder of those who are acquainted with the facts, and there is very capable raw material among the enlisted men. In every war, and in many domestic emergencies, the individual citizen soldier has been shown to be brave to the point of recklessness, but at the same time it has been proved that the militia apparently cannot be developed into the organized fighting machine that is needed in modern war.

Were Washington alive today it is extremely improb-

able that the progress made by the National Guard of this time would cause him to change his views in the slightest. Some of the States have excellent militia troops, while others maintain but farcical imitations of real soldiers. New Jersey, for instance, is rated fairly high in militia efficiency, but soldiers who have seen New Jersey's militia at close range must wonder how troops can be very far below the efficiency of the Jersey Guard and still be called soldiers.

The most charitable thing that can be said of the worst State troops, found largely throughout the South and West, is that they mean well. In Arkansas on one occasion the officers were all seen to wear their sabers backwards, in the manner of the most approved hero of the popular priced stock company. Of course the manner in which sabers are worn is of no importance, but it is an indication of the general knowledge of the officers in question.

The militia of today consists of numerous small "armies," varying in size from a depleted regiment to a division and varying equally in efficiency. How any other result can be expected of a force of soldiers subject to the whims of some half a hundred Governors, Legislatures and Adjutants General, it is hard to understand. Unity of control and team work are the great necessities of a military force, and in the State troops these qualities are, of course, entirely lacking. The General Staff of the Army has commented upon this fact as follows:—

Our traditional theory of a small Regular Army and a great war army of citizen soldiers is not yet embodied as a definite institution. The mobilization of our citizen army would not result in a well-knit national army. It would be an unco-ordinated army of fifty allies, with all the inherent weaknesses of allied forces, emphasized by the unusual number of allies.

A great fault of the Guard lies in the fact that it is a very poorly balanced force. Armies are like athletic teams, and require a proper proportion of each of the special units which make up the finished machine. As a baseball team needs pitchers, catchers and fielders, an army needs infantry, cavalry and artillery. This nation, on paper, has been said to have sixteen divisions, four of which are supposed to come from the Regular Army and twelve from the Organized Militia. The National Guard has considerably more than its proper number of infantry regiments for such a scheme, but

it is short 76 batteries of field artillery, 61 troops of cavalry, 12 field hospitals and 34 ambulance companies. The artillery shortage, in other words, amounts to thirteen regiments and the cavalry shortage to over five regiments.

Official reports of the War Department blame this lack of the most important auxiliary arms to the "failure of certain States to respond to the *appeal* of the War Department" when the latter asked that certain of the infantry regiments be changed to other arms of the service. What greater example could one want of the worthlessness of the present militia system? It is self-evident that any organization of which an essential requirement is central control and team work must entirely lack that essential under a plan whereby the central power may appeal in vain to the subdivisions. Furthermore, the 11,000-man shortage of the militia coast artillery is said by the War Department to be due to the fact that "repeated efforts to induce the delinquent States to meet their obligations to supply coast artillery troops have met with no satisfactory response. The condition is aggravated by the fact that the States can give no good reason for their failures."

A foreigner, reading such official documents, would probably find such statements most amusing. The American citizen, however, must find them shameful and alarming. They show that the day is not past when even more serious failures of obedience may occur in the militia, and as has been the case a number of times in the past, States may refuse to allow their troops to respond to the President's call.

Similarly, the War Department is unable to secure adequate training and discipline under the present system. In rifle practice, for instance, which is a very important part of a soldier's education, we find that there has been practically no improvement in the Organized Militia for years. In the last available reports it is shown that 111,140 men were supposed to have fired the instruction or record courses, but that actually only 66,974 fired at all. Men who fire the rifle are divided into six classes, namely: unqualified, second class, first class, marksmen, sharpshooters and expert riflemen. The War Department report shows that only 42,599 qualified as second class or better. A man does not have to be an extraordinary shot to qualify as an expert, while it is assumed that those who fail to qualify at least as second class are of no practical value in the firing line. It will, therefore,

be seen that only thirty-eight per cent of the Organized Militia would have sufficient skill to use their rifles with any real effect in war.

The instruction of officers and men from a theoretical standpoint is still unsatisfactory, and the Guard is still full of high ranking officers and staff officers who are absolutely incompetent. The most important officer in any State is the Adjutant General. In many cases these men are appointed from civil life to a position which practically places them in command of the troops of the State. Many of these generals would be unable to pass the examination for the grade of second lieutenant, and there are few who would be able to lead a corporal's squad in the field without considerable aid from some seasoned officer.

The elective system of choosing officers naturally results in the selection of the most popular rather than the most efficient officer. In many States, however, this system cannot be abolished as long as the Guard remains under State control, for the Constitution of the State makes it compulsory. The military courts in most States are the worst part of the absurd militia system of the United States, and in the best States these courts are not fully successful in maintaining discipline and dignity. Naturally under such conditions there is little discipline in the troops.

It is hardly necessary to say that we shall make a great mistake if we rely on the force of militia described above for national defense, or to point out that no pay, or other tinkering with present conditions, can eliminate such deep-rooted evils. The cause is political influence, and State control, and until both of these are removed the National Guard will be but a useless burden as far as national defense is concerned.

This, of course, is responsible for the proposal to form the new Continental Army. That force, however, is almost as impractical an idea as is the militia, and it cannot ever become successful unless the details so far announced are materially changed. Increasing doubt is being expressed as to the possibility of securing 133,000 men annually who are willing or able to devote two months each of three successive years to military training, and it is most improbable that an efficient corps of officers and non-commissioned officers can be secured. Such an organization as the Continental Army would require a large number of well trained officers and non-commissioned officers, and in order that they might have the



proper amount of experience it would be necessary that they remain indefinitely in the service. It is hard to imagine from where these men would come. Furthermore, to be successful the Continental Army must be a localized force. It must be supported by the enthusiastic approval of the locality from which its various sub-divisions may be recruited. To secure such approval the Continentals will require more than two months in a camp far away from their home station. They will need a permanent organization, effective in both winter and summer. They will need to appear before the public in exhibition drills, ceremonies, and other entertainments which will retain the interest of their own members and of civilians. Meetings will be required to keep up the *esprit*. Moreover, the officers will need to attend schools of theoretical and practical instruction throughout the winter months if they are to keep abreast of progress to the degree that is necessary to make them able to drill new men in the field, and the men should master the elementary drill in armories before going under canvas. For all these purposes the Continental Army will need the armories and other facilities which the National Guard now has.

Still more urgent will be the Continental Army's need for some of the better officers of the National Guard. It is ridiculous to suppose that the proposed citizen soldiery will be so plentifully supplied with officers that we can afford to ignore the many excellent ones in the Guard, and as a matter of fact it is a shame to waste the time of good officers on troops organized under our present militia laws. No doubt many of our best National Guard officers will try to get a commission in the Continental Army and will be so commissioned if such a force is raised.

This will greatly weaken the Guard, and when taken in connection with the existing difficulties of maintenance, the competition between the two forces for enlisted men, and the decreased prestige which the militia will have as a third, rather than a second force, will undoubtedly be the means of soon and entirely destroying the Organized Militia.

Hence, it is apparent that the Guard and the Continentals will not only seriously hamper each other, but that each system has many features which are quite necessary to a successful citizen soldier force. Under the circumstances it becomes evident that the situation calls for a combination of the old and the proposed plans, under which we would secure

a Continental Army under Federal control, but formed with the present Guard as a foundation, and containing the good of both plans.

In such a force the War Department would be able to regulate the number and kind of troops, and thereby secure a well balanced fighting force. It would be able to eliminate the useless and inefficient Guard officers who secured their rank through political or social influence. It could prescribe an adequate and impartial system of examinations for officers, could enforce a uniform system of training, could maintain real discipline, and would be able to order drills during winter months, and thereby make a prohibitive length of summer field-training unnecessary, though at the same time this training could be made considerably longer than is now required of the Organized Militia. Possibly such a citizen force can be maintained without universal service, and possibly not. If not, however, compulsory service in a Federal citizen soldiery would be far more acceptable than in a Regular force.

The great objection to such a scheme naturally comes from those who desire to retain the National Guard as the plaything of the State politicians and to gratify the vanity of the numerous and splendidly attired militia general officers. Furthermore, the money that is expended on the State troops adds no small amount to the contracts which are at the disposal of the State officers, and the adjutants general and other high militia officers take pride in their rank, and are by no means averse to the salary which often goes therewith.

These men use every possible means to emphasize the fact that the Constitution of the United States reserves to the various States the right to train the militia. That, of course, is a fact. It is the reason that our new force cannot be the Organized Militia, but must be termed the "Continental Army" or some other name which will properly designate citizen soldiers, without their being militia. The new force will be raised under the provision of the Constitution which permits the central government to raise and support armies—either regular, volunteer or citizen soldier, as the clause does not specify that these armies must be limited to any one kind.

There now remains no good reason for retaining the various little State "armies." The Constitution of the United

States, and the Civil War which was fought to maintain it, decided that no individual State can make war, either upon a foreign nation or upon its neighboring States, unless it be by act of Federal Congress, binding upon the entire nation. For any State to violate this provision is treasonable, and if there are those who encourage the maintenance of the militia with the idea that it may protect the State against national aggression or repression they are merely encouraging treasonable thoughts. Such sentiments surely have no proper place in our laws or institutions. States should settle their differences by the ballot, and while it is not impossible that some day some part of these United States may again take up arms against the Union, certainly our people should make no provision for troops with that idea in view.

This becomes especially so because it has been found that there is no real need for militia as a State police. The militia is even less fitted for duty in local domestic disorders than it is for war. Little as is the training which it receives for any purpose, it is almost entirely devoted to preparation for war and hardly at all for the purpose of preparing it for duty in small local disturbances. The rifles with which the militia is armed are of the most powerful kind, capable of shooting almost three miles. The bayonets are among the most deadly of close weapons, and the field artillery is out of the question for use in any local disturbance which does not border on actual civil war. Hence, both in training and equipment the Organized Militia is less suited to local police work than is a State constabulary which is armed and trained for the purpose, or even a good sheriff's posse. For very serious disorders provision could be made permitting Governors to use the Federal citizen troops stationed within their respective States.

The real soldiers in the Organized Militia, including most of the field officers and practically all the captains and the lieutenants, are strongly in favor of absolute Federal control. They do not care if they are in the National Guard of California, or of New York, or of Minnesota, or of Texas, as long as they are a good fighting force, and a part of the recognized and efficient land forces of the United States. They take little or no pride in being State soldiers, except insofar as their particular State may have a reputation for having a better guard than others. The State duties in strikes and other riots are only disagreeable, while the

thought of defending the nation against an invader is always a source of pride to a soldier, regardless of what other sentiments may be aroused.

While the Federal Government could not compel the States to allow their militia to enter the Federal Force or to loan or transfer the armories, it could pass laws which would make it sufficiently attractive to cause the States to desire to make the change, and where they refused, a new force along the same lines could be raised. However, it is thought that most States would make the change, which would save many of them hundreds of thousands of dollars annually, and it is certain that the average Guardsman would gladly remove his State letters from his collar and substitute therefor the letters "U. S."

It is apparent that the plans for our national defense are incomplete. In the first place, the American citizen should know that a large regular force, with compulsory service, is the true solution, according to the almost unanimous opinion of military experts. That disregarded, as it surely will be, our citizens should understand that they are wasting good money in attempting to maintain a State controlled militia, and that more will be wasted if it is attempted to raise a Continental Army without incorporating the many valuable features of the militia system.

Wars are won and lost largely by the degree of thoroughness and efficiency in previous preparation. The Federal Government, which must declare and conduct war, should have absolute control of the preparation of all fighting units which it will be compelled to use. Every cent which the United States spends on a military force of which the control is vested in forty-eight practically independent States is an almost total military waste.

We should maintain but two forces in this nation, each with its reserves. One should be a Regular Army of sufficient force to perform the duties of peace without hardship, and the other a "Continental Army" of Federal citizen soldiers, replacing the militia entirely for the purpose of national defense, but taking over its personnel, equipment, and the features of the present militia organization which time has shown to be valuable.

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